



Tips for Grandparents *who are* Raising Grandchildren in Illinois

These simple suggestions have been developed by the Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois to assist older adult caregivers in their efforts to provide quality care for their family's children. The Task Force can be reached through the Illinois Department on Aging's toll-free Senior HelpLine, **1-800-252-8966** (Voice and TTY).

Why Should I Establish Paternity?

First things first

Emotional and financial support from both parents gives a child the foundation for a good life. Your grandchild is entitled to financial support from the father when legal paternity has been established. Illinois law now allows unmarried parents to establish legal paternity for their baby without having to go to court and often before the mother and child even leave the hospital.

What's the best gift I can give my grandchild?

Every baby has a father, but not every father is a legal father. Many teen mothers are not married, so the father has no legal tie to the child.

A father who is not married to the mother becomes a legal father by establishing paternity. Your grandchild needs a legal father. Here are the reasons why:

- * Your grandchild has a right to know his or her father and mother, and to be loved by both as well as by all of his or her grandparents.
- * Your grandchild can get child support money when legal paternity has been established.
- * Your grandchild may need medical information and medical history from the father's family to have a better chance at a healthy life.
- * It will be possible for your grandchild to claim Social Security benefits, pensions, veterans' benefits, life insurance or inheritance rights if paternity has been established.
- * Even if your grandchild's father is now in school or unemployed, he may have a good job someday and be better able to provide for his child.

Only parents can establish paternity, but as a grandparent you can help by making sure your daughter or son understand the rights and responsibilities parents have and the benefits they will give your grandchild by establishing paternity.

If your grandchild's paternity is already established, it will be easier for you to collect child support for your grandchild from either or both parents.

The law protects children

Under Illinois law, the father has responsibilities for his children whether or not he's married, no matter how young he is. In fact, the Illinois Department of Public Aid's Division of Child Support Enforcement will try to locate the father even if he has left the state. The department can require the father to take genetic blood tests to determine paternity of the child. He also can be required to pay child support.

For more information...

If you have questions about establishing paternity or collecting child support, call the Child Support HelpLine at **1-800-447-4278**.

Persons using a teletypewriter (TTY) can call toll free at 1-800-526-5812.

To get child support services, persons who do not receive public assistance may be charged a small application processing fee of up to \$25.

Or, call the **Illinois Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine:**
1-800-252-8966 (Voice and TTY).